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Summary record of the 14th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 13 October 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Węgrzynowska (Vice-Chair) (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 64: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/71/41)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/71/205, A/71/206, A/71/213, A/71/253, A/71/261, A/71/277 and A/71/413)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/71/175)

1. **Ms. Joubli** (Switzerland) said that her Government had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its first two Optional Protocols. It had plans to ratify the third, and encouraged the few countries that had not yet ratified the Convention and its Optional Protocols to do so. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular targets 16.2 and 5.2, provided a promising approach to many global problems related to children's rights, including violence against children, lack of access to education, and harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, child marriage and early and forced marriage. In view of the great importance of the study called for by General Assembly resolution 69/157, the Swiss Government was funding a post at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva to facilitate its launch. Other Member States should also respond to the call for funding for the study.

2. Many challenges remained in the area of children and armed conflict. Long-lasting conflicts were particularly damaging to civilian populations, and resulted in violations of children's rights. According to the United Nations Special Envoy to Syria, the conflict there had caused more than 400,000 deaths, including those of thousands of children. The proliferation of attacks on hospitals and schools in the context of armed conflicts in countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen suggested a deliberate strategy on the part of certain parties. Barring exceptional circumstances, such attacks constituted grave violations of international humanitarian law.

3. **Mr. Radomski** (Poland) said that promotion and protection of the rights of the child should continue to guide policies and strategies, despite the multiple crises currently faced by the international community. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was unique in that, for the first time in history, it gave children the right to be heard. His country's legal framework for the protection of children's rights included an ombudsman for children: an independent State institution responsible for upholding children's rights in accordance with the Convention and other relevant instruments.

4. Despite such structures, challenges in the area of children's rights remained and additional problems were emerging, such as the issue of children's rights in relation to new digital and communication technologies. Migrant children were particularly vulnerable. Under Polish law unaccompanied migrant children were granted, inter alia, legal representation, decent living conditions and social assistance. The Polish Government took all measures possible to reunite them with their families, which was the most important help that could be given to migrant children.

5. **Mr. Mminele** (South Africa) said that children continued to be abducted or recruited in order to be used as sex slaves, helpers, guards and armed fighters. Many of them died in the process, and others were taken away from their communities and suffered untold emotional, developmental, physical and psychological harm. The indoctrination of children by non-State armed groups was of particular concern. In addition, armed conflicts destroyed States' social services structures, meaning that children in conflict-torn areas did not have access to education or health services, or even water or nutritious food, factors which deepened poverty. The importance of children having access to basic services in a safe and secure environment could not be overemphasized. His Government remained committed to the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as well as implementation of other relevant instruments. For societies to be sustainable and prosperous, children must thrive in safe environments.

6. **Ms. Cupellini** (Italy) said that, through the 2030 Agenda, young people had the chance to shape history and set a course towards a more sustainable future. The Sustainable Development Goals provided a holistic approach to the promotion of the rights of the child, but concrete actions were needed to transform the Goals into realities. Her Government placed the highest premium on advancing children's rights in both

legislative and practical terms, especially in the most disadvantaged places.

7. In January 2016 Italy had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, enabling Italian children to bring complaints about violations of their rights directly to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child if they could not find a solution at the national level. In August 2016 the Government had adopted its fourth national action plan on the rights and development of the child. The plan outlined how Italy would implement the Convention and how it would, inter alia, combat child and family poverty and ensure the provision of early childhood socio-educational services.

8. Lastly, Italy had strengthened its efforts vis-à-vis the migrant and refugee children entering Europe. In 2016 more than 21,000 unaccompanied minors had reached the shores of Italy. The Government had developed a migration compact, built on its strong commitment to saving lives at sea and containing concrete, achievable targets related to the root causes of migration. It had also promoted a resettlement programme aimed at saving women and unaccompanied minors, whom it considered the most vulnerable migrants. Migrant and refugee children must be treated first and foremost as children, with a focus on the protection of their rights.

9. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) said that his Government was actively working to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which all Member States should ratify. His country's comprehensive law on the protection of children and adolescents applied to all children and adolescents in its territory. The Convention — on which his Government would submit its next periodic report in December 2016 — and the national law established a model for action based on absolute respect for children's rights. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health services was guaranteed by a national sexual health and responsible reproduction programme set up in 2002, which had had many positive effects, including helping to prevent unwanted pregnancies. A 2006 law had recognized the right of all children and adolescents to receive comprehensive sex education in school.

10. His Government had stated on various occasions that the terms "prostitution" and "pornography" were not applicable in relation to children and should not be used in international documents; they should be replaced by "commercial sexual exploitation of children". Argentina was firmly opposed to the use of children in armed conflict and was a signatory to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, in addition to other international instruments concerned with children and armed conflict and forced child labour.

11. **Ms. Castillo** (Mexico) said that Mexico was a young country, with children and adolescents comprising one-third of its population. Taking a proactive approach to the protection of the most vulnerable, her Government had promulgated a national law on the protection of children and adolescents, which it implemented through a national system that included measures at the federal, state and municipal levels.

12. Through its participation in the Third Committee Mexico was determined to promote the rights of children, particularly when they had been neglected as the rights of migrant children were. Worldwide, almost 50 million children were outside their countries of origin. Displaced children disproportionately suffered the effects of xenophobia and lack of access to health and education services. Thousands of them fell prey to trafficking and sexual exploitation. Through the work of the Committee, her Government would seek to give a voice to displaced children.

13. In its capacity as a pathfinder country with the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, Mexico had developed a national roadmap which set out clear, forceful and quantifiable commitments. It was thus continuing to strengthen its institutional capacity to protect children, as well as pursuing its work with international human rights and other specialized bodies to guarantee children's full exercise of their rights. Her Government hoped to expand dialogue in order to foster sustainable peace in all the environments in which children were present: school, home, communities and cyberspace. To establish such peace, public policies should empower children and adolescents to be capable of denouncing violations of

their rights and to know how to fully exercise their rights.

14. **Mr. Ruíz Blanco** (Colombia) said that his Government was ensuring that the rights of the child received priority attention in the decisions taken in the context of building stable and lasting peace in Colombia. In his country a process of awareness-raising was helping to change the attitudes and behaviours that perpetuated violence against children. Colombia had taken important steps to promote children's rights, including the development of an inter-institutional strategy to improve children's living conditions and the expedited adoption of the national Code on Childhood and Adolescence. The commitments to protect children made in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants must be upheld. Governments should find alternatives to detention for children and their families; they could look to the Global Strategy — Beyond Detention 2014-2019 of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for ideas.

15. Child-centred measures and investments, targeting particularly the most vulnerable, were essential to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and thus constituted decisive weapons in the fight against inequality. Accordingly, development resources should be allocated to such measures and investments under the 2030 Agenda. Access to sexual and reproductive education and sexual health services for children and adolescents was essential to the fulfilment of their rights.

16. Bullying, including bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity, should be addressed comprehensively by a range of actors, including parents, educators and policymakers. The international community should take on a more prominent role in the fight against bullying, including through the establishment of stricter definitions of what constituted bullying, the consolidation of relevant information and the establishment of think tanks to address bullying. A Colombian law on bullying at school provided support for the victims of bullying and their families, as well as counselling for bullies and their families.

17. **Mr. Cepero Aguilar** (Cuba) said that it was lamentable that the advances made in children's rights were uneven owing to the unequal concentrations of wealth in the North and the South. The problems faced by children could not be resolved without the establishment of a fair and equitable international order, which would eradicate poverty and hunger, end war, place humanity over capital, and protect the environment.

18. Cuba had a solid record with regard to children's rights: children were not used in armed conflict, forced to work, trafficked by people traffickers or illegal migrant traffickers, used for organ harvesting, illegally adopted or made into servants. Since 1991 Cuba had been a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In September 2015 it had presented its initial reports on the first two Optional Protocols to the Convention, which had resulted in recognition of its achievements with regard to the protection of children and adolescents. Its achievements were the fruit of free universal national health and education systems. Infant mortality was down from 60 deaths per 1,000 live births prior to 1959 to only 4.3 currently, and Cuba was the first country to have been recognized by the World Health Organization for eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and syphilis. According to the World Bank, Cuba had the best education system in the world. It had made such important progress despite the embargo imposed on it by the United States for more than a half-century. The General Assembly must continue to play a leading role within the United Nations to ensure the promotion of the rights of the child.

19. **Ms. Sukacheva** (Russian Federation) said that Russian social policy gave priority to the support, strengthening and protection of the family as the fundamental unit of Russian society, as well as to guaranteeing a child's right to a family, and preserving the moral values and spiritual basis of family life. The protection of the rights and interests of children was included in the State family policy concept for the period to 2025, the National Children's Strategy for the period 2012-2017, and the National Security Strategy for the period to 2020, which contained several major long-term policies on strengthening the role of the State in guaranteeing personal safety, particularly of children and adolescents.

20. As a broad range of government bodies and officials oversaw the protection of the rights and legal interests of children, the State Commission for Young People and the Protection of their Rights continued to

host outreach sessions to increase awareness of issues relating to children. The Presidential Commissioner for the Rights of the Child also carried out work to preserve and protect the rights, freedoms and interests of children, while bringing legislation on children's rights in line with the Russian Constitution and international norms. All regions of the Russian Federation had also established offices for children's ombudsmen. In addition to recent effective mechanisms to promote children's social awareness, knowledge of legal matters and participation in protecting their rights, children's social councils in all regions were educating children in traditional Russian values, civic responsibility and patriotism.

21. The emerging trend to separate the interests of children and parents, including in United Nations documents, was of great concern as it would cause the relationships between parents and children to be considered as fundamentally adversarial and would undermine the status of traditional cultural and family-based values in raising a child. As such a practice was contrary to both the interests of the child and the constitutional norms of democratic States, the Russian Federation would continue to defend the preeminent right of parents with respect to the raising of their child and the presumption of the parents' good faith when implementing parental rights, while safeguarding the inviolability of family life and the rights of the family from arbitrary interference.

22. **Ms. Goldrick** (Nicaragua) said that the Government of Nicaragua recognized the importance of teaching children about values, rights and responsibilities to ensure that future generations were tolerant and socially engaged.

23. The Government was committed to upholding the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to that end had strengthened relevant legislation and established social programmes aimed at supporting various groups, including vulnerable children, children with disabilities, indigenous children and children of African descent. The Government had also introduced free school meals, launched an anti-bullying campaign and set up a free 24-hour hotline for children staffed by a team of psychologists, lawyers and social workers.

24. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presented a further opportunity to uphold the rights of children. Global efforts to eradicate poverty required the full support of the international community, including resource mobilization. Countries affected by migration should safeguard the rights and freedoms of children, on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities. At the same time, the international community must address irregular migration in a humanitarian manner, ensuring that procedures for dealing with child migrants respected their rights and were in line with international law and human rights instruments.

25. Safeguarding the rights of children was the shared responsibility of the State, families, local communities and society as a whole. The Government was committed to working with national ministries and families across Nicaragua, as well as with the international community, to ensure that children's rights were respected. She called upon the authorities and political forces to put their differences aside and work together to guarantee children's rights and equal opportunity for every child.

26. **Mr. Harari** (Libya) said that the ratification by the majority of States of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto had strengthened efforts by Governments and civil society organizations concerned with the rights of children, and relevant United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to ensure that children lived in safe and secure environments.

27. Libya had incorporated the provisions of the Convention in its national legislation, recognizing that ensuring appropriate support and care of children was an essential prerequisite for human development, the advancement of societies and the achievement of sustainable development. Regrettably, however, gross violations of the rights of children continued to be perpetrated in many parts of the world; children's lives continued to be threatened by armed conflicts, the number of child victims of trafficking continued to rise, and children were increasingly at risk of abuse, exploitation and cyberbullying on the Internet.

28. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underscored the dignity of children and their right to live and grow in violence-free environments. The international community must take immediate and determined action to address the root causes of violence against children, while also promoting a culture of zero tolerance for all forms of such violence.

Libya fully supported the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative, which had been launched by the Special Representative on violence against children and noted with interest the contents of the Special Representative's annual report (A/71/206), particularly the information provided on the adoption of national strategies and legislation to combat all forms of violence against children. Libya also noted with interest the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (A/71/261).

29. Libya believed that families were the bedrock of society and that strong families provided a nurturing environment in which children could flourish. Strong families also protected children from attempts by terrorist groups to recruit them into their ranks, which had been facilitated by the global communications revolution. Educational institutions could also play a key role in ensuring that children were not seduced by extremist ideologies. The international community must redouble its efforts to ensure that all children grew and prospered in safe and nurturing environments.

30. **Ms. Salazar** (Peru) said that in September 2016 UNICEF had presented its draft country programme document for Peru, which covered the period 2017-2021. UNICEF and the relevant national bodies would need to work together to ensure the success of the programme and improve the lives of all children, in particular vulnerable and excluded groups.

31. At the national level, considerable progress had been made in recognizing, protecting and promoting the rights of children. The country had adopted a national action plan for the period 2012-2021 aimed at tackling child malnutrition, ensuring access to high-quality education and reducing the prevalence of violence against children. Peru had also adopted a specific plan on chronic child malnutrition and anaemia, and a strategy for the elimination of child labour.

32. Peru was committed to implementing and monitoring national child protection policies across all sectors and at all levels of government, as evidenced by the country's active participation in the Group of Friends on Children and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government was also committed to ensuring that all children could grow up in appropriate environments, safe from the risk of child labour, sexual exploitation and human trafficking, and called upon other Member States to do the same.

33. **Mr. Nguyen** Duy Thanh (Viet Nam) said that in the 26 years since Viet Nam had started implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, respectively, the country had created a solid legal framework and taken a number of measures to safeguard children. For instance, the Government had approved a programme of action on the prevention and elimination of child labour and established a national fund for children to mobilize domestic and international resources. To ensure that such initiatives were child-sensitive, the Government held regular forums with children. The Government had succeeded in achieving universal primary education, improving secondary enrolment rates, eliminating gender inequality in access to education, and halving infant and child mortality rates. In addition, at the global level much had been done to reduce child mortality, increase school enrolment rates, improve gender equality and give children a voice. That constituted a solid foundation for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly target 16.2 on ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

34. Hundreds of millions of children continued to live in extreme poverty, without access to proper education, health care or social services, and at risk of violence, sexual abuse, harmful customary practices and armed conflict. He called upon Member States and the United Nations system, including UNICEF, to redouble their efforts to address such challenges and create a world fit for children.

35. **Ms. Bardaoui** (Tunisia) said that the inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals of a specific target on ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking, all forms of violence against and torture of children was a significant step forward. Tunisia was committed to protecting children, as evidenced by the range of preventive measures it had taken. For instance, the development plan for the period 2016-2020 included provisions for strengthening child protection laws; ensuring children's participation in relevant

policymaking processes; and improving medical and psychological health-care coverage for children in rural areas, with a view to preventing social exclusion and marginalization. Efforts had also been made to strengthen links between pupils and teachers by improving infrastructure and reviewing education programmes. In addition, the Ministry for Women, Family and Childhood had launched Internet radio stations for children in rural areas and organized an awareness-raising campaign in collaboration with Tunisian artists to educate children about the dangers of isolationism. In that connection, she called upon all States parties to act to ensure that no child was forgotten or marginalized.

36. **Mr. Al Muhairi** (United Arab Emirates) said that, although the international community had achieved notable successes in recent decades in its initiatives to promote respect for the rights of children, millions of children continued to live in abject poverty or in desperate humanitarian conditions. The report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/71/205) indicated that, worldwide, more than 10 million refugee children lived in precarious situations in which they were at risk of falling under the influence of extremist and terrorist groups. To counter the threat posed by such groups, the international community must take decisive and urgent action to address the situation of refugee children and ensure that their rights were fully respected.

37. Upholding the rights and addressing the needs of children was a top priority in the development policies of his country, which had recently adopted legislation to strengthen respect for their rights. His country had also been appointed to chair the Virtual Global Taskforce, which was working to eradicate the online sexual exploitation of children, for the period 2016 to 2018.

38. The United Arab Emirates strongly believed that children must enjoy access to high-quality education, and, to that end, continued to make significant contributions to support educational projects targeting millions of children, particularly girls, in low-income countries. His country had also sponsored the recently adopted Human Rights Council resolution on realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl. The United Arab Emirates was also continuing its malaria prevention and polio vaccination campaigns, which were protecting millions of children worldwide.

39. To promote the interests of children, States must, first and foremost, address the needs of mothers. The Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, which was presided over by Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, was therefore working with national and international stakeholders to formulate and implement strategies to improve the care provided to mothers and their children, in line with the highest international standards and the country's Vision 2021 strategic plan. The United Arab Emirates would, moreover, host the Fatima bint Mubarak global forum on motherhood and childhood in November 2016.

40. In February 2015, the United Arab Emirates had hosted a United Nations Population Fund meeting on reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health in humanitarian crises, and the principles enshrined in the outcome document of that meeting, the Abu Dhabi Declaration, had been incorporated in the Secretary General's "Every woman every child" global strategy. A follow-up meeting had also been convened in Abu Dhabi in 2016 to formulate a five-year plan for implementation of the recommendations contained in the Declaration. Furthermore, in collaboration with Norway, his country had held a series of workshops on maternal and infant mortality reduction strategies in September 2016, during which his country had announced that it was stepping up its support for projects to improve maternal and infant health in Yemen.

41. **Mr. Giacomelli da Silva** (Brazil) said that the Government of Brazil had more than halved extreme poverty since 2004, thanks in part to cash transfer programmes that had benefited 14 million families and helped to lift 8 million children out of poverty. In October 2016 the Government had launched a new early childhood programme, backed by a proposed investment of $100 million, to provide 750,000 children aged 6 and under with proper nutrition, health care and education.

42. Brazil had achieved Target 3.A of the Millennium Development Goals — eliminating gender disparity at all levels of education — ahead of schedule. It was essential to teach children about gender equality and provide comprehensive sex education, with a view to promoting a lasting culture of tolerance and

non-discrimination. In addition, the Government had established a programme to combat sexual violence against children and was working towards the full implementation of the national ban on corporal punishment.

43. Supporting the call for a global study on children deprived of liberty, he said that such a study would shed light on the number of children held in detention and help Governments to adopt best practices. Of particular concern were the rights of migrant children. Advisory Opinion OC-21/14 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which had been issued in response to a request from the Southern Common Market, was an invaluable normative framework that should be taken into account by the global study.

44. **Ms. Mwangi** (Kenya) said that Kenya had made significant progress in advancing the rights of children with the introduction of free and inclusive primary education, free school meals, bursary schemes and cash transfers for vulnerable children. Such initiatives had increased enrolment rates, improved gender parity and helped to ensure that vulnerable children and children with disabilities could get a basic education.

45. The Government was committed to providing high-quality antenatal, postnatal and paediatric health care. Nevertheless, the under-five child mortality rate remained unacceptably high, and advances made in combating HIV/AIDS and malaria over the previous decade risked being reversed if resources for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission were not sustained.

46. Kenya had made efforts to eliminate harmful cultural practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation by introducing laws criminalizing such practices and setting up a board to accelerate the implementation of the national plan of action on eliminating female genital mutilation. The country had also introduced policies and legislation aimed at eliminating child labour and was raising awareness of the issue at the community level through education programmes.

47. In order to improve the availability of data, which was vital for effectively addressing issues affecting children, the Government had begun work to record vital statistics for all Kenyans and for that purpose was harnessing the power of information and communications technology.

48. **Ms. Stener** (Norway) said that the right to education, particularly for girls, was a core priority of the Government of Norway. Noting the importance of education for sustainable development, poverty eradication and gender equality, she said that uneducated girls were at greater risk of child trafficking, child labour, forced marriage, sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Attacks on schools in conflict zones were on the rise, making it increasingly difficult for children to enjoy their right to education, and she urged all Member States to sign the Safe Schools Declaration.

49. Female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage were harmful cultural practices that deprived girls of their childhood and prevented them from participating fully in society. In addition, girls subject to such practices were often at greater risk of sexual abuse and other forms of violence.

50. Norway was deeply concerned about the pervasiveness of violence against children and had prepared an escalation plan for combating violence against children that addressed how to prevent and detect violence and improve coordination between public entities. Norway also encouraged all countries to ban corporal punishment.

51. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that for the past five and a half years, his country had been confronting a ferocious terrorist campaign by armed terrorist groups that were seeking to destroy the very social fabric of Syria and the intellectual and moral compass of an entire Syrian generation. Those terrorists had attacked and killed children in their schools, churches, mosques, playgrounds and homes, depriving them of their education and driving them to the high seas in search of refuge. Some children had fallen into the clutches of Turkish mafia gangs and had drowned in the Mediterranean, while others faced exclusion and humiliation in destination countries that still claimed to be paragons of human rights and social justice. Armed terrorist groups, which were supported by States in the Arab world, the region and beyond, continued to perpetrate the most brutal crimes against Syrian children, while also indoctrinating them with violent extremist ideas in order to create a new generation that glorified violence and terrorism.

52. The Syrian Arab Republic had sent hundreds of letters to the Security Council detailing how those terrorist groups continued, with the silent complicity of the international community, to abduct children and train and brainwash them in military camps before forcing them to carry arms and witness and even participate in heinous crimes, including beheadings and the stoning of women. On 7 July 2015, a letter had been sent to the President of the Security Council regarding a video recording released by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) showing a mass execution of Syrian army soldiers that had been carried out by children who were no older than 14 years of age. Furthermore, on hundreds of occasions, the Syrian Arab Republic had provided the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict with reports and other materials regarding the recruitment of Syrian children into armed groups. Those materials had included a documentary film, broadcast by the United States television programme "Frontline" on 23 November 2015, which had documented gross violations of the human rights of Syrian children and their systematic recruitment by ISIL. The entire world was also aware of the beheading of the Palestinian refugee child Abdullah Isa in Handarat refugee camp near Aleppo by the so-called Nur al-Din al-Zanki terrorist group, which some Member States continued to claim was part of the so-called moderate opposition. Furthermore, according to Turkish media agencies, child rapes and the trafficking in babies and in children's organs also took place in the refugee camps. Children were also the victims of forced marriages and, in 2015, some 36 per cent of Syrian brides in the refugee camps in Jordan had been minors at the time of marriage.

53. The Member States shedding crocodile tears because children were dying in Aleppo were the same States that were helping to spill their blood. The Syrian delegation urged those States to acknowledge and take stock of the misery they had inflicted on children in so many countries around the world, including Viet Nam, Cambodia, Iraq, Libya and Yemen.

54. **Ms. Nescher** (Liechtenstein) said that according to UNICEF estimates, 28 million children had fled violence and insecurity, jeopardizing their right to health care, education, food and a carefree childhood. One of the key elements of the United Nations' efforts to ensure that all children could enjoy those fundamental rights was the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. Reiterating Liechtenstein's support for the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, she said that any interference with that mandate seriously threatened the integrity of the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

55. In the ongoing conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, schools and hospitals had been targeted by air raids, which was a gross violation of children's right to education and health care. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, close to 40 per cent of Syrian children were no longer attending school. Only half of the world's refugee children attended primary school and the figure was even lower for secondary education. While mitigating the immediate suffering of children must be the top priority, the international community should also think beyond basic survival to education, which was vital for improving vulnerable children's prospects.

56. In 2015, over 100,000 unaccompanied minors had applied for asylum in Europe. Such children were particularly at risk of discrimination and exploitation, including prostitution and child labour. Recalling the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted in September 2016, she urged all Member States to ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

57. **Ms. Ibrahim** (Maldives) said that the Constitution of Maldives and other national legislation guaranteed the rights of all children, including children with disabilities. Maldives had undertaken extensive reforms to bring its domestic law into line with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international norms and best practices.

58. The country had made considerable progress in reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases, and ensuring universal health insurance. In addition, education was free for all children.

59. It was estimated that at least half of the world's children had endured some form of violence in 2015 alone. Maldives had taken a number of measures to end violence against children, including the enactment of legislation criminalizing all forms of child exploitation and giving victims greater procedural rights. For instance, the Domestic Violence Act allowed children to apply for protection orders. To ensure that such laws were translated into action on the ground, the Government had worked with law enforcement and social protection agencies to create effective reporting mechanisms, carry out awareness-raising campaigns and establish a free helpline where children could report abuse. Lastly, bullying, including cyberbullying, was a growing concern and the Government was developing a comprehensive legal framework on cybersecurity to address the issue.

60. **Mr. Wickramarachchige** (Sri Lanka) said that the purpose of the National Child Protection Policy introduced in 2013 was to elevate Sri Lanka's child protection standards to the level defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The National Child Protection Authority was striving to prevent early marriages and statutory rape, which were a main theme of the recent annual national Girl Child Day.

61. Sri Lanka was one of the few countries worldwide to outlaw school bullying, and School Child Protection Committees sought to create a safer school environment. The Government had also taken measures to safeguard children of migrant workers, the most socially vulnerable group, and had amended criminal law governing crimes committed by children.

62. **Mr. Nuno** (Spain) said that Spain had implemented most recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Two legislative reforms in the preceding year had considerably improved the Spanish education system and child protection mechanisms with measures raising the minimum age of consent for sex or marriage, developing the best interests of the child as a principle in the Spanish legal system, and introducing harsher laws to punish child abuse and exploitation.

63. Information from a joint infancy data project between the Spanish Government and UNICEF had been published online in September 2015 to guide public policy and evaluate progress. A non-legislative standing committee on the rights of minors had been created in March 2016 to ensure that all political, legislative, planning, budgetary and other measures were in the best interests of children and complied with national and international laws on child rights.

64. **Mr. Zulu** (Zambia) said that the Government was drafting the Children's Code Bill to domesticate international children's rights instruments ratified by Zambia. Its National Child Policy had been reviewed in 2015 and, once fully implemented, would improve children's access to essential services such as education, health, water, sanitation and shelter, and increase ministerial accountability with regard to child rights and welfare.

65. Zambia had introduced a free basic education policy, and a re-entry policy permitting pregnant students to continue their education after they had given birth. The Government had also adopted a five-year strategy in April 2016 aimed at reducing early and forced marriages involving children by 40 per cent, with a view to eliminating such marriages by 2030.

66. **Archbishop Auza** (Observer for the Holy See) said that encouraging improvements in child health and mortality contrasted with the fact that millions of children were dying every year from preventable causes, were living with HIV, or had no official record of their existence. Furthermore, one third of women worldwide aged 20 to 24 had been child brides, and a girl died every ten minutes as a result of violence.

67. Refugee and migrant children were exposed to many dangers including trafficking, exploitation, drowning, hunger, thirst, and exposure to extreme weather. They were entitled to protection under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Millions more children were trapped in situations of conflict, extreme poverty or environmental vulnerability. The primary driver of mass displacements of populations was wars and conflicts, and it was within our power and responsibility to address such root causes.

68. **Ms. Cid Carreño** (Chile) said that the National Policy for Children and Adolescents 2015-2025 would prepare for the full implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, expand the focus of related policies to encompass the protection of children and safeguarding of their rights, and systemically address the social, environmental and cultural conditions of children. An institutional system for guaranteeing

rights and guiding public policies would be installed gradually as a focal point coordinating all ministries and public services.

69. In September 2015, a bill to improve comprehensive protection of children's rights began the legislative process. The main thrust of the draft law was equality and non-discrimination, protection of children from all forms of violence, promotion of due process and professional specialization in child protection, and restriction of child detention to exceptional cases. The Government was also co-organizing an international conference on crime prevention and the rehabilitation of young persons in conflict with the law in November 2016.

70. **Ms. Sonjai and Mr. Rujanant** (Thailand), speaking as youth delegates and presenting a joint statement, said that all children born in Thailand were entitled to birth registration as a measure to prevent statelessness, and all children in Thailand were entitled to 12 years of free education regardless of nationality or legal status. In 2015, the Thai Government had launched a scheme to support early childhood development by providing a monthly cash allowance to parents of children up to the age of three living in impoverished households, and a national plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by training law enforcement in the necessary awareness and tools.

71. Thailand had recently adopted a national master plan for prevention of and response to violence against children for the period 2015 to 2021, which sought to provide a comprehensive national and regional implementation framework for stakeholders. Children and Youth Councils at national, provincial and district levels empowered millions of children in Thailand to participate meaningfully in decisions that affected them.

72. **Ms. Tan Wee Zi** (Singapore) said that, as a country with no natural resources, people were its only resource. Protecting, educating and nurturing children were therefore high priorities. Singapore had one of the lowest child mortality rates, and came first in the OECD global school rankings of 76 countries. The Government had implemented measures to raise standards in the early childhood sector and ensure that childcare and pre-school services remained affordable and accessible for all.

73. In 2016, Singapore had introduced a pilot system to improve support for low-income families with children aged six and under. To increase parents' awareness of the effect of divorce on children and mitigate its impact, the Government had amended its legislation in February 2016 to require divorcing couples with minor children to attend a mandatory parenting programme if unable to agree on all matters relating to their divorce.

74. **Ms. Halevi** (Israel) said that children in Israel received state-funded education from the age of 3 to 18, or 21 for those with special needs. All children were entitled to afterschool day care, health care, extracurricular classes and a hot meal programme regardless of socioeconomic status, giving everyone equal opportunity to become an active and contributing member of society.

75. The Government had partnered with civil society organizations to establish mixed schools for Jewish and Arab children, and the President had introduced an educational programme focusing on tolerance, co-existence and freedom of religion for Jews, Muslims and Arabs, religious or secular.

76. **Mr. Canay** (Turkey) said that children were afforded special protection under the 2010 Constitution. Turkey's national child rights strategy and action plan for 2013-2017 aimed to improve children's living standards by identifying targets in the areas of health, education and social inclusion and to provide adequate protective and preventive measures. Turkey was in the process of ratifying the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure and was a party to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and the Convention on Contact concerning Children. Turkey prioritized closing the gender gap in education and other areas, and had co-hosted with Canada and Peru an annual celebratory event to mark the International Day of the Girl Child.

77. Turkey assisted children in various emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations through its comprehensive humanitarian and development assistance programmes, including projects carried out in Afghanistan and parts of Africa focusing on education and health services. With the changing nature of conflicts, the international community must take concerted action to help children in situations of

armed conflict, who were subject to mass abduction, torture and sexual violence, as well as attacks in schools and hospitals. Protracted conflicts had given rise to the largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, with an increasing influx of displaced populations causing even further difficulties for vulnerable groups, including children. The World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul in May 2016 and the September 2016 Summit for Refugees and Migrants had extensively addressed those issues.

78. Turkey provided refuge for over 3 million Syrian and Iraqi refugees and had also provided Syrians with temporary protection status and access to the Turkish health-care system. Over 170,000 Syrian babies had so far been born in the medical facilities in Turkey's temporary protection centres. Although it was doing its utmost to meet the growing needs of the child refugees, especially for education and health care, it had been unable to provide schools, classrooms and teachers for over half of the 960,000 school-age refugee children.

79. **Mr. Medan** (Croatia) said that United Nations actors should cooperate more effectively to deliver assistance to all children in peril, including children suffering from harmful practices, being systematically abused or fleeing conflict zones. The right to education was key to achieving sustainable development, stability and overall progress. In promoting education for all as a human right and as a basis for realizing other rights, Croatia had been one of the Champion Countries of the Global Education First Initiative.

80. It was particularly important that the Human Rights Council continue to convene an annual day of discussion on the rights of the child, while being able to hold thematic panels on the most pressing issues. Croatia's cooperation with UNICEF had resulted in a number of good practices that had attracted overseas interest, such as the Violence Free Schools project to reduce peer violence. The new UNICEF programme for Croatia focused on, inter alia, activities to prevent violence against children and their exclusion from society.

81. Given the unprecedented migration flows that had been unleashed by armed conflict and political instability, Croatia and UNICEF had organized a subregional conference in October 2016 on how to respond effectively to the needs of unaccompanied and separated children in south-eastern Europe. The main objectives of the conference were to reflect the key challenges in responding to the needs of migrant children, to exchange innovative solutions and examples of good practices, and to develop recommendations for strengthening national protection systems in order to effectively address the issue.

82. **Ms. García Gutierrez** (Costa Rica) said that children, especially the poorest and most marginalized, were more vulnerable to poverty, social and economic inequalities and violence. Violence negatively impacted social and emotional development. Constant exposure to acts of violence could lead to patterns of abuse, exploitation and more violence, especially when access to quality basic social services for protection, recovery and reintegration were limited. Protecting children from violence must be a national priority as well as a global effort in order to bring about intergenerational, multiplying benefits and effects.

83. Thousands of children in armed conflicts continued to experience grave violations of their rights, with girls additionally affected by rape, sexual abuse and forced marriage. It was a matter of deep concern that, after their release, children recruited by armed groups were seen as security threats, detained and accused of having connections with those groups. Reintegration of those children should instead receive priority attention. Following the success of the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign, it was hoped that there would be a significant reduction in the recruitment and use of children by national security forces. Greater efforts must be made to address the existing gaps in preventing such recruitment and use, and in apportioning responsibility for it. Attacks on educational and health centres not only violated the standards of international humanitarian law but were also grave violations of the rights of children to education and a healthy life. Those who attacked schools and hospitals should be prosecuted.

84. Among the people who had been forced to abandon their homes in search of security and new opportunities, children were the most vulnerable, particularly those who were unaccompanied or had been separated from their families. Working from the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility, countries of origin, transit and destination must take appropriate measures to reduce, as far as possible, the risks to children by providing access to protection,

health, education and psychological support. As a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants, many of whom were children, Costa Rica was implementing protocols designed to guarantee the rights of all children, regardless of their migration status. Bearing in mind the child's best interest, it gave priority to providing access to education and health-care services, and guaranteeing the right to family reunification.

85. **Ms. Al-Khater** (Qatar) said that Sustainable Development Goal 16.2, which called on the international community to end all abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children, was far from being realized. In her report, contained in document (A/71/205), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had noted the persistent violations of the rights of children in many parts of the world as a result of armed conflict, including in Syria, where children were killed, denied their fundamental rights to education, health care and security, suffered mistreatment and abuse, and were forcibly displaced from their homes. It was particularly alarming that more than half of the world's 21.3 million refugees were under 18 years of age. Qatar also noted with concern that, according to the report of the Special Representative on violence against children, contained in document (A/71/206), at least half of the world's children had endured some form of violence in the previous year.

86. Qatar was committed to protecting and promoting the rights of child within the country, its region and beyond and, with a view to safeguarding children from the devastating effects of armed conflict, was continuing to strive to provide safe and secure environments for children in conflict zones in which they could enjoy their fundamental right to education. To that end, Qatar had launched a number of initiatives in areas affected by conflict and war, including the QUEST initiative, which provided education and training to Syrian refugees, and the Educate a Child programme, which aimed to provide a primary-level education to at least 10 million of the world's poorest children, including, in particular, children in conflict zones, by the end of 2016. Qatar had also helped to convene the High-level Thematic Conversation on Children and Youth affected by Violent Extremism, which had been hosted by the President of the General Assembly in June 2016.

87. At the national level, Qatar would continue to comply fully with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto. It had given priority consideration to children's rights in the Qatar National Vision 2030, and had established a number of institutions to strengthen respect for those rights, including the Shafallah Center for Persons with Disabilities, which provided education, rehabilitation, social and health services to children with special needs.

88. She urged the international community to redouble its efforts to resolve the world's ongoing armed conflicts, and to find just and appropriate solutions to the massive flows of refugees and internally displaced persons that those conflicts had created. For its part, Qatar would continue its efforts to foster the creation of safe, peaceful and inclusive societies in which the rights of children were fully respected.

89. **Mr. Visonnavong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that, in recent years, his Government had strengthened the legal framework for the protection of women and children from all forms of violence, including domestic violence, through the introduction of laws on juvenile criminal justice and violence against women and children. It had also developed a national action plan on the prevention and elimination of violence against children for the period 2014-2020. Additionally, the proportion of the budget allocated to children's health and education had been increased, a nutrition strategy had been adopted and vaccination campaigns had been carried out across the country. A pilot project aimed at promoting school attendance in rural and remote areas through the provision of free lunches had been successful and would be expanded to other areas of the country. Moreover, the third national report on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was being prepared.

90. There were still challenges to be overcome, particularly in rural and remote areas of the country, where poverty levels remained high and health-care services were insufficient. His Government would do its utmost to ensure that all children in the country were able to fully enjoy their rights. The support of development partners, international organizations and

United Nations development agencies would continue to be invaluable in that regard.

91. **Mr. Jelinski** (Canada) said that the growing number of child migrants was an emerging global priority that needed to be addressed. Canada was a member of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, and recognized the significant contribution of that initiative in mobilizing action and resources to prevent and respond to violence against children, including children on the move. Canada also continued to work closely with multilateral institutions and international platforms to counter all forms of violence against children and young people, including in situations of armed conflict.

92. Canada chaired the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, which in recent years had focused on the practical implementation of normative frameworks, especially with regard to bringing to account the perpetrators of violations or abuses against children. Moreover, in May 2016, Canada had pledged 600 million Canadian dollars in humanitarian and development assistance, including 1 million Canadian dollars to support the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The funding would provide support and field guidance to child-protection practitioners on the monitoring, advocacy and development of action plans to enhance the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

93. **Mr. Al-Hussaini** (Iraq) said that his country believed that the protection and education of children were prerequisites for the creation of stable and peaceful societies. Iraq had therefore taken a number of steps to strengthen its compliance with relevant international instruments on the rights of children, including through the Child Welfare Authority, which brought together representatives from all relevant ministries under the stewardship of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs to devise strategies for the protection of children, including in collaboration with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The Authority had adopted frameworks for action on child labour, child marriage, school delinquency, children in conflict with the law, the sexual abuse of children, child victims of armed conflict, violence against children, children with special needs and the dangers posed to children by mines. The Authority was also working with relevant governmental and civil society stakeholders to incorporate the Agenda 2030 goals and targets on children in its initiatives to promote children's health, education and gender equality, as well as its initiatives to strengthen accountability and oversight. Iraq was also taking action to ensure that children who had lost their homes could continue to live in dignity. In that regard, the Ministry of the Interior was striving to combat child homelessness by providing shelter to homeless families. Iraq was also endeavouring to provide those children with high-quality education and, through its education law, which provided for free and compulsory education for children, was striving to prevent children from dropping out of school to enter the labour market.

94. Terrorist gangs affiliated with ISIL had killed, mistreated and abused, and caused the forced displacement of thousands of children in areas under their control. Terrorist attacks in Iraq had had a horrendous impact on children's education and health and many children who were living in areas besieged by terrorist gangs were suffering from malnutrition. The situation was further exacerbated by rising poverty levels. Children were also being abducted and held in terrorist camps where they were brainwashed and trained to carry out further terrorist attacks.

95. Iraq urged the international community to strengthen its information and communications technology (ICT) oversight mechanisms so that it could more effectively combat criminal and terrorism-related ICT activity. The international community must also step up its collaboration with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) to enhance efforts to track criminal and terrorist activity and the online recruitment of children. Iraq also called for the establishment of an international intelligence agency to further enhance the sharing of information on the activities and cross-border movements of terrorists.

96. Despite the many serious challenges it faced, Iraq was determined to comply with all its international obligations on the protection of children. In particular, it would continue to strive to prevent the recruitment of children by terrorist groups, and provide all possible support to children in areas liberated from ISIL control.

97. **Mr. Adeoye** (Nigeria) said that his country's President had prioritized a social development

programme targeting the recruitment of over 500,000 teachers in order to enhance the quality of education in public schools. In addition, following up on the 2015 national survey campaign to end violence against children, the Government had launched information and awareness-raising campaigns for parents, families and communities at all levels on protecting children from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. In order to address violence against children, the Government had also established a national joint task force for the prevention of child sexual abuse, and was implementing an act aiming to prevent and punish the perpetrators of child abuse.

98. Nigeria condemned the deplorable acts committed against Nigerian children, including the targeting of schools, by Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations. A number of students, particularly girls, had been transferred from high-risk areas to selected federal unity schools across Nigeria. The Government had also commenced the rehabilitation and reconstruction of damaged schools and communities in north-eastern Nigeria under the Safe Schools Initiative.

99. Substantive progress was being made through renewed cooperation and strategic counter-terrorism operations in securing the release of the Chibok school girls, twenty-one of whom had regained their freedom. The released girls were receiving psychosocial therapy and undergoing strategic reintegration and reorientation programmes to restore their mental and physical balance. All victims of Boko Haram should be able to reunite with their families and regain their dignity and trust in humanity. The Government regarded children involved in terrorist activities as victims rather than transgressors of the law.

100. **Ms. Alemayehu** (Ethiopia) said that, as over half of the Ethiopian population was under eighteen years of age, the rights of children continued to be a priority for her country's Government. As the Ethiopian Constitution guaranteed the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, policy and legislative frameworks, as well as institutional mechanisms, had been established accordingly. The national child policy focused on development and growth, prevention and protection, and rehabilitation, care and support, which were critical to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of children nationwide. Administrative measures undertaken by the Government in the social, economic judicial and other sectors had also benefited children.

101. In addition to having achieved Millennium Development Goal 4 on reducing child mortality and reducing the prevalence of early marriage, Ethiopia had combined the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in its second five-year growth and transformation plan for the period 2015-2020. The plan recognized that investing in children was critical to achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.